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CORRESPONDENCE.

The Significance of the Osteological Characters of the Chionides.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK,'

Dear Sir:—

My attention has been called to the very excellent and comprehensive article by Dr. Percy R. Lowe on "Studies on the Charadriiformes.—III. Notes in Relation to the Systematic Position of the Sheath-bills (Chionididae)," which appeared in 'The Ibis' of last January (1916); I have also read 'The Auk's' comments thereon and citation therefrom (April, 1916, p. 220).

Since reading Doctor Lowe's article, I have gone over the osteological material representing the Sheath-bills in the collection of the United States National Museum, and compared the skull and other bones of several of these birds with the corresponding parts of the skeleton in the fowls, pigeons, plovers, oyster-catchers, and their allies near and remote. So far as I am personally concerned, I find little or nothing in the strictures made by Doctor Lowe in his above cited contribution, reproduced in the last

April 'Auk,' upon my careful work on the osteology of all these birds — published nearly a quarter of a century ago — which in any way induces me to change my opinion. He further states (*loc. cit.* 153): "In its osteological features the Sheath-bill presents certain resemblances to the Oyster-catcher," — a fact that I stated in 'The Auk' over twenty-three years ago, but which Doctor Lowe seems to have overlooked. That my present belief is that the pigeon and fowl *resemblances*, plainly seen in the skull of a Sheath-bill, are, in a way, resemblances only, is amply substantiated in a much more recent article of mine, which my critic likewise seems to have entirely overlooked in his *Chionis* contribution, and which 'The Auk' ignored when it came to republish his comments. I refer to my article on "An Arrangement of the Families and the Higher Groups of Birds," which appeared in 'The American Naturalist' for November–December, 1904 (pp. 833–856), and in which I place the Suborder Chionides between the Longipennes and the Charadriiformes, where I most emphatically take it they belong.

Doctor Lowe, in the course of his argument, refers to Marsh and his genus *Palaeotringa*, — a form that probably had no more *Tringa* in it than it had osteological characters of a good many other very different kinds of Water Birds. But it would be idle to go into that subject here; and I would refer Doctor Lowe to my memoir "Fossil Birds in the Marsh Collection," published by Yale University only last year, for a full discussion of Marsh's types. This paper has over 150 figures on plates, illustrating Marsh's "types" of fossil birds.

In closing I would say that it is extremely likely that, at this writing, Doctor Lowe and I hold opinions on the relationships of the Sheath-bills to other birds that would be practically very much in agreement; and I trust that, in the future, he will do me the justice to cite my most recent opinions in all cases having to do with avian taxonomy. Probably some of my papers on this subject — and there are several hundreds of them — are not readily accessible to him, in which case I will be glad to bring their contents before him.

Faithfully yours,

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Washington, D. C., May, 1916.